

CLAIMS:

It is claimed:

1. A method of sharing directory listings in a distributed environment using a computer network comprising:

maintaining a database including a plurality of directory listings, wherein each listing is associated with a referral phone number, at least one keyword and a bid amount;

a directory listing owner is willing to pay for a single telephone referral;

publishing directory listings into a shared data system;

receiving a directory assistance request in the form of a keyword from the customer;

identifying the directory listings from the shared data system having keyword terms generating a match with the request;

ordering the identified directory listings into a phone number result list in accordance with the values of the bid amounts for the identified directory listings;

selecting one of the directory listings;

generating a paid referral business transaction and associating it with the listing owner's advertising account;

generating one or a plurality of derivative business transactions to execute the business processes involved in the referral transaction.